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ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: TO KDEM MARR PGOV MI

SUBJECT: MALAWI PKO DEPLOYMENT POSSIBILITIES

REF: A. STATE 51828

1B. LILONGWE 124

11. (SBU) Summary: According to MOD officials, Malawi is still planning on sending an MDF battalion to join the PKO mission in Darfur, though there are currently no plans to deploy to Somalia. Minister of Defense Davies Katsonga is currently in Addis Ababa, in part to discuss the mission with African Union officials and hopefully develop a timeline for Malawi's deployment. After Katsonga returns to Malawi on April 24, post plans to confirm the results of his trip to Ethiopia, as well as engage with other contacts on the issue. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Poloff spoke with Ministry of Defense Principal Secretary Patrick Kachimera on April 19 to discuss Malawi's

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PKO plans, and possible deployments to Darfur or Somalia. Kachimera reiterated Malawi's concerns over joining the mission to Somalia--i.e., the GOM has received no formal request from the AU and still has questions over its capacity to deploy. However, he was much more positive about joining the mission to Darfur. Kachimera said that Malawi is committed to deploying a battalion to Darfur, and plans to "dispatch a senior MDF official" to Addis Ababa for planning purposes.

13. (SBU) However, Kachimera went on to say that the main obstacle to deployment is still the acquisition of Armored Personnel Carriers. Though the MOD has ordered twelve APCs from South Africa with Taiwanese funding, these have yet to be delivered. Kachimera also said that the MDF is ideally seeking a total of twenty-four APCs, and asked PolOff for USG funding for the remaining twelve. PolOff reiterated previous stated policy that the USG can't commit additional resources until definitive deployment plans are put in place.

Taiwanese Defense Attaché Menghao Hsu confirmed the APC procurement delay, but said that the MOD had told Taiwan that they might be able to deploy with only the 12 APCs, and use conventional vehicles for additional transport. Kachimera said that the MOD would make a public announcement regarding the deployment after they had determined a specific deployment date/plan, which he hoped the Minister would bring from Addis Ababa.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: While Kachimera confidently proclaimed that the planned deployment to Darfur is "definite", his certainty should be taken with a grain of salt. The APC issue is still a very real obstacle to deployment, and it is not a certainty that the GOM is willing to move ahead with only the 12 APCs they have on order. Also, past proclamations by the MOD (reftel B) regarding PKO deployments have been overruled by President Mutharika, calling into question the extent of the Ministry's authority. Regardless, post will try to confirm the results of Katsonga's trip to Ethiopia upon his return next week, and also work with our other contacts to clarify GOM policy and plans. End Comment.

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